

BSSA/KV/2720

NOTE ON ACTIVITIES OF ABWEHR IIIF,
THE HAGUE, AGAINST SOE.

The following comments are issued as an appendix to Mr. E.D. Stamp's paper with the above heading.

These comments are indicated in the paper by red lines against the paras under reference.

Page 2, paragraph 2.

The realisation that the whole of the then supposed set-up of SOE in HOLLAND is under German control came to us as a result of the Bayswater investigation in November, 1943, and not, as stated in the report, until after the return of CHIVE and SPROUT in February, 1944.

Page 3, paragraph 1.

A serious misconception arises here due to the mis-reading of a date. Mr. Stamp has based his remarks upon the fact that BROADBEAN went to the Field on the 18th February, 1942. This agent was, in fact, despatched on the 18th February but a year later, in 1943, and therefore there can be no question of suspicion aroused by him having any value in relation to the position of JOHANNES, or to the evacuation route having any bearing at this juncture since, in point of fact, it was not established until very much later. In addition to this in

Page 3, paragraph 2.

the statement is made that JOHANNES was arrested. Neither of these two points is correct. BROADBEAN, as stated, did not go to the Field until a year later and the Germans were, in my opinion, far more clever than Mr. Stamp has given them credit for in that, (quite apart from anything they may actually have done), they did not tell us that JOHANNES had been arrested, but sent a message to us that he had been shot dead while resisting arrest.

Page 4, paragraph 2.

The report under review states that nothing is known as to how ARNAUD became known to SOE or accepted by them as an agent and, indeed, it is rather difficult to account for the ready acceptance of this man. The first mention of him is in a cable from BROADBEAN's W/T operator, GOLF, of the 7th May, 1943, in which he says, "BEST HELPER IS GOING TO BRING ADRIEN TO PARIS", the name ARNAUD not occurring until two months later when, on the 5th July, GOLF tells us that

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he met ARNAUD and discussed with him the catastrophe which had befallen ADRIEN in PARIS. At all times during the operational period under review, the Section, from my personal recollection, accepted the two words, "BEST HELPER" in the original telegram from GOLF and never questioned them, though, had they tried to question them, I doubt that their efforts would have met with very much success since absolutely nothing was known about this man and the only means of getting further information would be from GOLF, i.e. the Germans.

Page 7, paragraph 1.

It is incorrect to say that the VIC escape organisation accepted the four German agents "for what they pretended to be". I remember very clearly at the time representing to D/F on my own authority that these agents might be Germans and he did, in fact, warn VIC who has subsequently stated in an interrogation report that he only met ARNAUD once and never trusted him, taking good care to avoid him at other meetings which ARNAUD tried to arrange.

Page 7, paragraph 2.

The report states that APOLLO was dropped in Belgium "with instructions to use the route used by KNOPPERS in reverse and go to Holland". This is not accurate. APOLLO, together with the agent BRUTUS, was to have been dropped in Holland but the aircraft was shot down and crashed in Belgium; the two agents became separated but used the contact address of the MERTENS in Brussels provided by KNOPPERS which had been given them, not for their infiltration into Holland, but as a possible safe house in the event of their having to make a hurried escape from that country.

Page 8, paragraph 4.

Mr. Stamp's remarks on the use of checks are appreciated but I think that even more remarkable than the omissions which he mentions is the fact that the Section failed to notice a change from accurate to inaccurate checks in the traffic of one of the first operators, EBENEZER, after he had been in the field for three months.

Page 9, paragraph 1.

The chances of JOHANNES being broken were, of course, not considered because it was generally believed that he had been shot as stated above.

Page 9, paragraph 2.

The words "had each returned agent been meticulously questioned" hardly apply since no agent ever returned, with the exception of two - CARROT, who had never been in touch with his work and had idled on the continent for more than a year, going to Switzerland and other places, and APOLLO who had only been a short while in the field, who was most meticulously questioned as has been shown in the previous part of the report.

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Page 10, paragraph 1.

It is not considered that there is any discrepancy between the statements of VIC and APOLLO in that VIC amplified his remarks mentioned in the report, by describing how the route which he used for the passage of what he knew were suspect bodies was one parallel to his normal route and employed houses which were never used again, the ends being taken care of by dead-end houses and not by those used for his normal traffic.

Page 10, paragraph 2.

I agree that on the evidence, CHIVE and SPROUT should be affirmatively cleared of suspicion. This opinion is strengthened by sundry other pieces of information which have come our way, such as the notification of their escape which was passed to a Greko post (German frontier control) on the Franco-Spanish border.

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Note on Activities of Abwehr IIIF, The Hague
against S.O.E.

I have been encouraged by Squadron Leader Park to prepare a note embodying the results of the examination I have made from the information in our possession of the activities of Abteilung IIIF, The Hague, in so far as they were directed against S.O.E. In linking up information which we have recently received from agents captured in the field with information in the possession of S.O.E., I have been much assisted by Major Delaforce. The note which I have prepared is not intended to constitute a full report, which could only be prepared against all the available S.O.E. records on the activities in Holland and more important still against the whole of the W/T traffic which has passed between this country and Holland. The note is slender and gives no more than an indication of the methods employed and the problem with which both sides were faced. It does however, I think, illustrate certain points which may be useful in conducting other activities from this end and some lessons can, I think, be learnt from its perusal. At the end of the note I put forward certain suggestions with hesitation and the fullest appreciation of the fact that my inferences may be unjustified and that I am no doubt engaged in the dubious and undesirable pastime of "teaching my grandmother to suck eggs"!

Information regarding some aspects of the work of Abteilung IIIF in Holland over the period of about 2 years preceding D-day has recently been obtained from the interrogation of DAMEN and VERLOOP, two agents of that department and from MIERSEMAN whose duty it was, among other things, to advise Abteilung IIIF on coding matters. This information, when examined against the known facts regarding secret Allied activities in Holland over the same period, enables gaps in our knowledge to be filled up and throws a not uninteresting light on German counter espionage methods. During that period a battle was being fought between S.O.E., who were engaged in setting up a secret army in Holland, and Abteilung IIIF of The Hague, who were engaged in frustrating that enterprise. The German objective was, I think not merely to defeat the particular enterprise in which the British had embarked but also to penetrate, control and preserve the organisation which was being set up in order to ensure that Allied activities would not be diverted into other less well known channels. From such facts as are in the possession of M.I.5. it appears that in this endeavour Abteilung IIIF had a very considerable measure of success.

The S.O.E. Project

In June of 1942 a certain JOHANNES and a W/T operator to whom he was attached arrived in Holland. JOHANNES had been sent to contact the O.D., an indigenous loyalist organisation. He was to tell its leaders that he had come upon a joint Dutch/British mission and was to disclose to them the "plan for Holland" which had been worked out. He was to obtain their comments upon this plan and to emphasise that the Dutch Government in London had approved it in principle and expected it to be accepted in substance. After introducing himself to the leaders of the O.D., JOHANNES was to make contact with its various sub-groups operating throughout the country. JOHANNES was to report to London and London was to send out trained organiser instructors to the groups as and when JOHANNES reported they were ready to receive them. The members of the secret army were thus to be recruited from the O.D.; but once so recruited they were to be debarred from their previous activities and were thereafter to regard themselves as part of a separate organisation controlled from London. For the purpose of carrying out this mission JOHANNES had to organise reception committees for the weapons and supplies and additional personnel which were to be sent. Such was the ambitious plan and as I understand it the whole of S.O.E. activities in Holland were, during the next eighteen months, directed towards making this plan a success. Its failure at the end of that period would mean the failure of by far the greater proportion of Allied activities against Holland directed from London.

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As events have shown the plan had in it a flaw which proved fatal. If JOHANNES or the man sent to relieve him were to be captured and turned round the plan would not merely be defeated but might be successfully used by the Germans for the penetration of the S.O.E. itself. The way was opened for a German agent of Abteilung IIIIF, not merely to pose as an Allied agent, but to do so with all the authority and character of an S.O.E. agent in direct touch with and under orders from London.

The Organisation of Abwehr IIIIF

From DAMEN and VERLOOP we know something of the organization and personalities in Holland whose business it was to counter such Allied activities in Holland. DAMEN has described two of the principal officers who were responsible for penetration work. They were Hauptmann Ernst KEISEWETTER @ BADEN and Oberstleutnant GISEKE @ GERHARD. KEISEWETTER had been in the Balkans and joined the Abwehr in Holland in about April 1942. He was a German and in peace-time was owner of a glove factory in Erfurt. Oberstleutnant GISEKE, on the other hand, is a German professional soldier. Prominent also was a man named by DAMEN as HUNTERMAN @ HUETNER known in the office as "the Englishman". This man, who was a shipping agent on the West Coast of Africa before the war, appears to have directed the activities of a certain KUPP and Van VLIET and to have controlled the working of the transmitters dropped in Holland which came under Abwehr control. Further light on HUNTERMAN's activities has been obtained from the interrogation of MIERSMAN with whom HUNTERMAN was in contact in connection with his W/T traffic to this country. MIERSMAN describes HUNTERMAN as being in control of a number of such wireless links. He knows that ten different lines were maintained on this traffic and had been kept up for approximately eighteen months. He states that in about February 1944 HUNTERMAN closed down on the traffic. Under HUNTERMAN were a number of characters who worked outside the office and performed the actual task of making contact with members of resistance with a view to penetrating the organizations for which they were working. The principal among these were Van VLIET, a Dutchman, and ARNAUD, a German who appears to masquerade as a Dane and who has worked for the Abwehr since 1939. Both DAMEN and VERLOOP appear to regard Van VLIET as the principal penetration agent. Posing as a member of the Underground Movement, Van VLIET, according to VERLOOP, managed to trace a number of W/T agents and the Germans were always very quick to turn them round. Abteilung IIIIF could count on a substantial number of other individuals who were prepared to perform similar functions.

Evidence that S.O.E. Organisation was under control at an early date

The history of the agents who were sent to the Field from England to establish the secret army illustrates the methods adopted by Abteilung IIIIF and shows that the enemy were not merely successful in frustrating the enterprise but in disguising their successes and turning it to their advantage. JOHANNES arrived in Holland in June 1942 and there are indications that he never operated except under the control of the Germans. Whether this is correct or not, the organization was under control by the beginning of November of the same year. Although suspicion that all was not well was aroused in London in July 1943 when Mr. Cyril Harvey, after considering the matter, came to the conclusion that JOHANNES' successor, KILL, was in danger, it was not until later that S.O.E. had any serious doubts regarding the organization as a whole and it was not, I think, until the beginning of 1944 when the agents SPROU and CHIVE returned to this country, after escaping from a German prison camp and after meeting other S.O.E. agents imprisoned by the Germans, that it was finally realized that the organization was in fact hopelessly penetrated. In fact the organization was certainly under German control from the end of 1942; was most probably under control from the summer of that year (according to MIERSMAN August 1942) and it is very likely that it never operated at all except under control and that the Germans captured JOHANNES on or shortly after his arrival.

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JOHANNES was dropped in June 1942 when the "plan for Holland" was set into motion. He had, however, been preceded by another S.O.S. agent, a certain BROADBEN, who arrived in the Field in February 1942, being dropped to a reception committee arranged by the agent PAMPHIL. BROADBEN is identical with a man called FRANK whom DAMEN has described and regarding whose activities DAMEN has a substantial body of information. According to DAMEN three British agents, one of whom was BROADBEN, were dropped in Holland. As soon as these three men arrived they were arrested but worked for the Germans as double agents. After they had worked in this way for a few months a message was received from England congratulating them on the good work they had done and instructing them to return. DAMEN's information is not wholly correct since one of the men mentioned by DAMEN was not dropped but recruited in the Field. Furthermore the three men who were dropped were dropped at widely different dates and not, as one would have inferred from DAMEN's statement, at the same time. As appears hereafter, however, DAMEN's information regarding the steps taken by the Germans to deal with this situation is correct while it is certain that at some date BROADBEN did come under control. If, as DAMEN states, BROADBEN came under control on arrival in the Field the task of the Germans must, I think, have been fairly simple. We do not know that BROADBEN was apprised of the forthcoming arrival of KALE; but it seems probable that he was; and other agents, notably POTATO, had in the meantime been sent to the Field. It is probable that POTATO was in contact both with BROADBEN and JOHANNES and if BROADBEN was under control it is hard to believe that JOHANNES' activities were, if not controlled by, at least known to, the Germans.

According to MIERSMEIER, the Germans were in control from about August 1942. In addition to the direct evidence of admission of MIERSMEIER, I think an examination of the facts which are set out hereafter supports the view that IIF were in fact in control at a very early date and that MIERSMEIER's statement that the control began in August 1942 is not wide of the mark. Finally we have the evidence of the agent CHIVE, who was arrested by the Germans on making his descent in Holland at the end of November 1942 and who was then sent to a concentration camp. The interrogation of CHIVE when he ultimately escaped and returned to this country made it abundantly clear that at least by the end of 1942 the whole organisation was hopelessly penetrated.

History of S.O.S. Activities and Abwehr Counter Activities

From the outset it had been intended that JOHANNES should return to the U.K. and report after a few months in the Field and on 24th September 1942 ~~some~~ KALE was sent to relieve him together with a W/T operator named CUCUMBER. During the next few weeks some ten organiser instructors or W/T operators arrived in Holland. The control by the Germans of the organiser JOHANNES or of his substitute KALE, whose mission was similar to that of JOHANNES and comprised the organisation of the secret army, involved the control or potential control of the whole of that secret army; and if the evidence of DAMEN and MIERSMEIER is accepted these men must all have fallen into enemy hands. The recall of JOHANNES did, however, inevitably present a problem which was repeated on more than one occasion and to which on separate occasions Abteilung III found different answers: JOHANNES was notionally arrested and on 8th November 1942 it was reported to S.O.S. on the CUCUMBER W/T set that the arrest had taken place. This date has hitherto been accepted in London as being the actual date of CUCUMBER's arrest. There is in my view no reason at all to think that this view is correct. What is however probable is that if JOHANNES was arrested at this date, and his arrest cannot have been later than that, JOHANNES gave away everything he knew: which must have been everything about the secret army including the identity of KALE. Unless there are some facts which have never been divulged to us and which did not appear in Mr. Cyril Harvey's report referred to above, I do not understand how it could be supposed that the arrest of JOHANNES did not make it quite hopeless to endeavour to continue the undertaking which he had launched and of which he was the chief organiser. To act upon the footing that a captured agent has not been broken is to court, not merely peril to all concerned, but ~~disaster~~ disaster to the whole enterprise.

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Thereafter the duties conferred upon JOHANNES by S.O.E. and the part assigned to him by the Abwehr were carried out in the name of KALE. Upwards of twenty-five receptions were arranged over KALE's W/T set and contact was maintained with London through the CUCUMBER set down to the middle of July 1943.

In the meantime, however, the Abwehr had been presented with a further problem of a similar kind to that which had been dealt with on the

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recall of JOHANNES. In consequence of JOHANNES' disappearance KALE was asked by S.O.E. to send to England some other person thoroughly well-informed about the progress of the secret organisation. In face of this requirement the Abwehr determined to go through all the motions of supplying such a person. On the one hand this would serve the purpose of allaying any suspicion which might be felt in London regarding the security of the S.O.E. organisation and on the other hand S.O.E. could be made to disclose, through CUCUMBER to the Germans, the methods by which agents could be evacuated from Europe.

On 14.3.43 S.O.E. were informed that KALE would send his chief assistant, who was called ANTON. When asked for full particulars of ANTON the reply was that ANTON was Nicolaas de WILDE, Charlotte de Bourbonstrasse 228, The Hague, born 5.10.03. The Germans perhaps made an error or took a risk in giving these particulars regarding ANTON. In fact no such person as Nicolaas de WILDE lived at 228 Charlotte de Bourbonstrasse and steps had to be taken to guard against the risk of anyone being sent to contact him at that address. DAIEN was in fact in residence at 228 and he was given instructions by JOHSEWITZER and KUPP that if anyone came and asked for De WILDE he was to reply that the latter was away but would return in a few days. There is in fact a man called De WILDE working for Abteilung III who was born about 1903; and when the necessity arose he could, and perhaps did, play the part of ANTON. And when S.O.E. decided to arrange for ANTON's evacuation through Belgium and Holland someone was found by the Germans to fill this part, and he left Holland about 12.5.43 and travelled to Paris. We do not know the details of the arrangements made nor the route he took except that BROADBEN was told to carry out the evacuation and it is apparent that that route and those who operated it became known to the Germans. We know that the spurious ANTON was accompanied by a certain ARNAUD who, according to DAIEN, has been an Abteilung IIIIF agent since 1940 and who we also know was regarded by S.O.E. as a passeur of theirs. We have no information in this office to show the circumstances in which ARNAUD first became known to S.O.E. or accepted by them as an agent.

On arrival in Paris ARNAUD and ANTON made contact, presumably in accordance with directions given by S.O.E. to BROADBEN, with another S.O.E. agent, MARCEL by name. It was impossible to evacuate the party that moon and they had to wait a month. ARNAUD and ANTON returned to Brussels for that purpose - a step which to the uninitiated appears unusual - and on return to Paris they met the S.O.E. agent, MARCEL, by appointment in a cafe. We know from MARCEL who subsequently arrived in this country that so soon as he had sat down in the cafe with the others, three German soldiers came in and started to examine the cards of those at the back of the cafe. ANTON got up and walked out. ARNAUD said "They have arrested ANTON". MARCEL looked out and saw ANTON crossing the road in company with a man in civilian clothes. Such was the account, given by MARCEL when he arrived in this country, of ANTON's disappearance. A great deal of trouble was taken to decide whether ANTON had been arrested because he had been followed or whether it was sheer bad luck as the result of a snap check of identity cards. A great deal of trouble was taken to assess the dangers which would fall upon the organisation as the result of this arrest, regard being had to the fact that ANTON, according to MARCEL, had been carrying compromising papers. It never occurred to anyone that ANTON was nothing but a German agent, and that ARNAUD was lying when he said that ANTON had been arrested. ARNAUD's stock inevitably rose in the eyes of London and MARCEL was sent back to the Continent to fall into enemy hands. The problem raised by S.O.E.'s request for the sending to England of a man who was well acquainted with the secret army had been answered by the Abwehr with conspicuous success. So far were we baffled by this German trick and so far were we from understanding the nature of the game that was being played and the high stakes involved, that in commenting on the arrest an investigator remarked "if the Germans had known beforehand of this rendez-vous it is hard to believe they would not have arrested MARCEL and ARNAUD".

Indeed so great had been the success of the Germans in carrying

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out this ruse that it may well have encouraged them to carry out an even more impertinent and daring transaction. On this occasion the request of S.O.E. for the sending to this country of another man who had full knowledge of the secret army was anticipated by the Germans themselves who offered to send a man in close touch with the O.D. Furthermore on this occasion instead of choosing a fictitious individual or an individual who on arrival here might be shown up as a German agent, there was chosen for the part a man against whom nothing adverse could be known in London and who believed himself to be, and was in fact, a bona fide patriot; a man, KNOPPERS by name, whose case when he arrived in England aroused a great deal of interest and no little perturbation in our minds. KNOPPERS had been approached at the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943 by the Abteilung IIRF agent, VAN VLIET, who is referred to in the early part of this note. KNOPPERS had been doing some resistance work and had been in contact with a certain Colonel KOPPELT, when VAN VLIET, representing himself as a member of resistance, asked him if he might use KNOPPERS' address as a *boite aux lettres*. Thereafter KNOPPERS continued to see VAN VLIET regularly about once a week until he finally left Holland. VAN VLIET, on his first approach, claimed to be working for a General MANIERU and stated that he had been commissioned by the General to find out all he could about the requirements of secret organisations in Holland. He was in possession of what he alleged were forged documents purporting to have been issued by the Gestapo on production of which he obtained frontier passes enabling him to travel between Holland and Belgium on behalf of the General. He asked KNOPPERS to assist him in this work and to obtain as much information as he could regarding secret organisations to hand over to the General. This KNOPPERS agreed to do and got into touch with several organisations for this purpose. On 20th June 1943 VAN VLIET asked KNOPPERS, who had by then collected quite a volume of information and passed it to VAN VLIET, if he would travel to England and would return with instructions for these resistance organisations. As KNOPPERS understood it the idea was that several resistance movements needed coordination and central direction and official recognition and support from London. This could best be obtained by sending an emissary from Holland and securing his return as a liaison officer with London credentials. The merits of such a journey from the point of view of the Germans do not need stressing. In order to facilitate KNOPPERS' journey Abteilung IIRF had already, through the instrumentality of BROADBEN's W/T set, made contact with London on the subject; and on 5.6.43 a message had been sent to London purporting to come from the agent BROADBEN via another agent, GOLF, stating that the sender had come into contact with Colonel KOPPELT, a leading man of the O.D. He wished urgently to send over his best man for a few weeks. It was suggested further that he should be sent over with the spurious Anton DE WILDE. S.O.E. immediately gave their approval, ordered BROADBEN to make arrangements for the journey and advised him that the new man (KNOPPERS) should not come with Anton de WILDE but should be ready to leave alone in about 4 weeks. S.O.E. would give further instructions. The Germans allowed almost precisely one month to pass before sending a message ostensibly from GOLF giving KNOPPERS' cover name and stating that he urgently required to leave as soon as possible. In reply BROADBEN was given a password and an address to which KNOPPERS was to call. A week later on 15th July, KNOPPERS had a meeting with VAN VLIET at Breda, there he was handed over to a so-called police inspector who took him to turnhout where they again met VAN VLIET who in turn took KNOPPERS to a flat in Brussels. It is not clear whether this was the address given by S.O.E. to BROADBEN but this appears probable. Two days later a new passeur turned up in the person of HOLLEVOET (who is possibly identical with a character of that name known to us to have been working in conjunction with Louis DERAY on behalf of Abteilung II of Brussels in passing German agents to Paris en route for this country). HOLLEVOET took VAN VLIET and KNOPPERS to Jeumont where KNOPPERS was handed over to ARNAUD while VAN VLIET and HOLLEVOET returned to Brussels. KNOPPERS was held up in Paris for some weeks and was then brought by S.O.E. channels over the Pyrenees to Spain. For the purpose of facilitating KNOPPERS' mission, and also no doubt in order to build up ARNAUD, KNOPPERS was provided with documents purporting to come from resistance circles. These comprised a note to the Dutch or English authorities concerned, suggesting the desirability of establishing

an escape route over which important Dutch intellectuals, industrialists and officials in Holland who, without themselves acting in a rash manner, had assisted in the sabotage of the German war effort, might be got out of Holland; not necessarily to England but to some neutral country. For this purpose it was suggested information should be obtained from ARNAUD "who you know as the chief passeur for Belgium". There was also included a memorandum regarding resistance in Holland which made general statements about loyalist activities in Holland but no specific information of any kind.

The German object in sending KNOFFERS to this country was defeated, not I think, because of any inherent defect, but because of what, from their point of view, was an unfortunate accident. Unfavourable, and possibly incorrect, reports had been received by the Dutch in London regarding Colonel KOPPERT. KNOFFERS' contact with Colonel KOPPERT accordingly made him, to a limited extent, suspect. The fact that the message from BROADBEN stated that KNOFFERS was KOPPERT's righthand man, though incorrect in fact, further prejudiced KNOFFERS in the eyes of those who had to interrogate him. KNOFFERS being suspect was not allowed to return to Holland; and then when investigation was still proceeding, information, which had been in the possession of S.I.R. for many months but which had not been distributed by them and which showed VAN VLIET to be, if not a German agent, at least highly suspect, was brought to our notice. We came to the conclusion that KNOFFERS had been planted on S.O.E. by VAN VLIET and that BROADBEN was working under German control. ARNAUD, however, escaped suspicion and the suggestion that the S.O.E. escape route from Paris onwards might have been blown was not accepted.

There are two points in connection with this enterprise to which it may be worth calling attention as indicating the fallibility of Abteilung IIIF. In the first place, when KNOFFERS came to be interrogated, there was an inconsistency between his story of the origin of his mission and the account which BROADBEN had given of him as righthand man of Colonel KOPPERT. In the second place the timing was bad. The proposition put forward by BROADBEN for the sending of KNOFFERS to this country was first put forward on 5.6.43 whereas KNOFFERS stated that it was not until the 20th of that month that he was asked to come to England; and then of course not by Colonel KOPPERT but by VAN VLIET. It is curious to find these two mistakes being made, but the fact that they were made, I think, may have prevented us from spotting the fact earlier that the whole arrangement had been made by the Germans. It could hardly be supposed, if the venture was being controlled by the Germans from above, that such clumsy mistakes could have been made.

The KNOFFERS visit was a rebuff for the Germans. Further difficulties followed. ANTON had been intended to come here to report on the progress of the secret army. ANTON had been "arrested" and S.O.E. never accepted KNOFFERS, who knew nothing of the secret army, as a substitute. According to KALE, who was supposed to be in charge, one STEAK recruited in the field, had taken ANTON's place as second in command. S.O.E. determined to get STEAK over here and on 31.7.43 BROADBEN, who was supposed to be in charge of evacuation, was told to bring out STEAK together with the agent PUNKIN. He himself was to come with PUNKIN. Before any further steps had been taken BROADBEN was also instructed by London to send TRENIN out with STEAK. We know from DASH that all the three agents, BROADBEN, PUNKIN and TRENIN were interned or under control and we have only the word of the Germans that there was ever such a person as STEAK. The Germans were therefore placed in the position of having either to make excuses for the failure of BROADBEN to obey these instructions, an almost impossible task; to arrange the "arrest" of the four men in circumstances which would inevitably suggest that the S.O.E. organisation had been blown; or to adopt some other and more subtle course. In fact they adopted a technique similar to that adopted when ANTON was called to London but carried it to a further extreme. Four substitutes, agents of Abteilung IIIF, were provided for the four S.O.E. agents. They were DASH, HANCOCK, an unknown Frenchman, and one, DE WILDE, who was probably the man who had played a similar role when a substitute had to be found for ANTON. Three of the men were taken by KNOFFERS by train to Paris where they met the fourth man. There they were handed over to ARNAUD with instructions to find out by what route they would be evacuated

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from France. ARNAUD handed them over to a member of the VIC escape organisation who accepted them for what they pretended to be. Thereafter the four men, after being handled by a number of members of this organisation, were taken to Perpignan staying at VIC safe houses en route. The last stage of the journey was in a lorry across the frontier. Before they reached the frontier HARGRE and DAIEN jumped off. A little later the Frenchmen jumped off and hailed a car belonging to the Feld Gendarmerie showing his papers. He made this car follow the lorry and in due course the driver was arrested. The four German agents returned to Paris and made their report to ARNAUD. Subsequently S.O.S. were informed by a member of the VIC organisation that the four agents had been arrested in the Pyrenees while attempting to escape. This was accepted as a sufficient explanation of the failure of this, the third attempt, to bring to England someone who was fully informed regarding the organisation of the secret army.

The suspicion engendered by KROPPERS' connection with Colonel KOPPERT prompted S.O.S. to enquire of HERMANDEAN whether he knew KOPPERT or VAN VLIET. The German gave a reassuring reply stating that VAN VLIET was only known to KOPPERT from conversations concerning KROPPERS' journey but that VAN VLIET was a collaborator of ARNAUD. On November 7th 1943 following information which had been received from S.I.S. to that effect, GOLF was informed that VAN VLIET was an enemy agent; a statement which GOLF roundly repudiated stating that these suspicions were unintelligible, that VAN VLIET was a great patriot etc.

VAN VLIET had indeed, with the knowledge of S.O.S., become so well informed regarding the S.O.S. organisation that it would have been, from the German point of view, fatal if he became known to us as a German agent; and it must be assumed that it was in face of the suspicions which had been aroused in London that the Germans determined to take steps to rehabilitate VAN VLIET. It so happened that the S.O.S. agent APOLLO was dropped in Belgium with HURST on 18.10.43 with instructions to use the route used by KROPPERS in reverse and go to Holland. APOLLO reached his contact address in Brussels, the house of a certain MME. MERTEN, and was there visited by VAN VLIET. VAN VLIET successfully played the part of a patriot and one can only suppose that APOLLO was not warned before he left, of the perils with which he would inevitably be faced in following the line which KROPPERS had followed. APOLLO was fortunate in the part for which the Germans designed for him in that his arrival offered them the opportunity of building up VAN VLIET by assisting his return to this country. On 6.11.44 APOLLO was taken to Paris by ARNAUD. The two men stayed in VIC safe houses and were both taken to Lyons by the VIC courier JEANNE. There they met VIC's second-in-command and ARNAUD returned to Paris, APOLLO travelling to Spain. APOLLO brought a tolerably good account of VAN VLIET and recounted it on his arrival here. At almost the same moment a further opportunity arose to carry out a similar trick. The night after APOLLO was dropped, Lt. John Kenneth HURST, a U.S.A. airman, made a forced landing in Holland. A boy took him to a house and he was passed on by unknown individuals and eventually taken to a bookshop in DOORN where he met one DODO who claimed to be a Dutch officer. DODO told HURST that he had been in the U.K. for three years and had recently returned by parachute. He had gone to an address in Brussels, where he had been contacted by VAN VLIET. DODO introduced HURST in DOORN to a man who sent him to Tilberg. At Tilberg a uniformed policeman took him to the frontier on a motor bicycle and then, after changing into civilian clothes in a wood, the man took him, travelling on bicycles which had been hidden for them in the wood, across the frontier to Turnhout. There HURST was met by VAN VLIET who motored him to Brussels and established him at the S.O.S. safe house of MME. MERTEN. On 25.11.43 HURST was picked up by Louis DEBRAY and taken to Charleroi. DEBRAY bribed the guards on the Belgian frontier and the two men crossed on foot near Jeumont. There HURST was given a false identity card by a woman and then, still with DEBRAY, taken to a railway junction (Aulnoye?) where they were met by ARNAUD who took HURST to Paris. In Paris HURST was put up and then taken by the VIC passcase, JEANNE, to Lyons.

The escape from the German concentration camp in which the S.O.S. agents captured in Holland were interned of the agents CHIVE and THOUT in August 1943 made it impossible for the Germans to continue with their deception unless these men could be recaptured. Both men were fully aware of the

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true facts, both from the terms of their interrogation by the Germans and from their conversations with other captured agents. Furthermore CHIVE had a transmitter which the Germans had been playing back. No doubt in the hope that CHIVE and SPROUT would not succeed in leaving occupied territory, the Germans proceeded upon that footing and in fact continued to transmit on the CHIVE transmitter down to February 1944. CHIVE and SPROUT did, however, actually reach this country in February 1944 and at some stage the Germans became aware of this.

According to MIERSMANN, HUNTERMAN continued to play back all the transmitters he had turned round until February 1944 and then closed the traffic by a message on all lines addressed to two S.O.E. officers by what in fact were their correct names, thanking them for their long mutual cooperation and promising them that if they came to the Continent they would be received with the same care as their agents. MIERSMANN states, that according to HUNTERMAN, his false play must have been known to England since November 1943 because two agents who had been arrested escaped in the Autumn of 1943 and had informed England. Who these agents were is unknown to MIERSMANN, but there can be no doubt whatever that the reference was to CHIVE and SPROUT. It is a further testimony to the accuracy of MIERSMANN's information that the traffic did continue till February 1944 when it was broken off. Subsequently a month or so later such a message of farewell as MIERSMANN indicates, substantially in the terms mentioned by him, was received addressed to those S.O.E. officers.

Comment

In putting the above story together I have inevitably given some consideration to the question how far, what appears to have been a series of disasters, could have been avoided from the London end. I set out the results of that consideration, not in any critical spirit, but in the hope that a consideration of the following points may possibly be of use to those whose task it is to organise other similar activities. The story is, I think, a fair illustration of the fact which is sometimes forgotten, that counter-espionage is very much easier than espionage, and that an espionage organisation in enemy-occupied territory is extremely vulnerable to penetration. If that penetration is skilfully done, it can remain undiscovered over a long period. These are inevitable risks. Moreover espionage and sabotage no doubt require a habit of mind in those who direct them which must disregard the individual and, if the target is sufficiently important, must count casualties as a matter of insignificance. Risks must be run. The suggestions I put forward are not designed, so to speak, to strike a balance between ruthless action on the one hand and filtering timidity and indecision on the other; but to ensure so far as possible that enterprises such as that which was set afoot in Holland are not defeated by lack of reasonable precautions.

What has struck me most has been first, the vulnerability of the organisation in Holland was apparently not appreciated; secondly that the probable or possible implications of minor mishaps upon the security of the organisation as a whole were not considered and thirdly that no steps were, so far as I can see, ever taken by means of trap questions or otherwise to find out whether the operators were or were not under control. With the exception of very few messages containing both true and bluff checks the traffic from the field relating to the evacuation of KROPPERS (GOLF and BROADBEAN) only contain bluff checks. Now, although the use of a true check ought not to be taken as evidence that an agent is operating freely, persistent absence of the true check ought, at least, to raise the presumption that the agent is under control. This inference was never drawn. Incidentally it says much for the quality of the agents who were sent to the field that they did not apparently divulge their true checks to the Germans. Our experience in this country of combatting German espionage activities has, I think, taught us that an agent's controller is always most unwilling to believe that his agent has been blown or has betrayed him and this may lie at the root of the failure to appreciate the

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true significance of the absence of signals showing the agents were operating freely. The arrest of JOHANNES also illustrates the same point. Although no doubt there are notable exceptions, it surely ought to be assumed as a working rule that if a man falls into enemy hands everyone with whom he has been working is compromised and all the information he has to give is in the hands of the enemy. Our experience of the German agents in this country and in the field strongly supports that view. I do not know if anyone considered what were the chances of JOHANNES having been broken; and if so whether consideration was given to the question what facts and what other agents he was in a position to give away. It seems to me that if these matters had been given proper consideration the whole enterprise would have to have been abandoned; not because it was dangerous and involved risks, but simply because it was foredoomed to failure. Not only, however, does there appear to have been a failure to look the facts squarely in the face but also a failure when suspicion had once been aroused to test those suspicions. It would not I think have been difficult to have put a few trick questions on the traffic with a view to seeing whether the reaction was that which would be expected if the agent was not under control. In this connection it is worthy of notice that we know that some of the W/T operators who had been captured did not themselves operate on behalf of the Germans, their acts being taken over by the Germans for that purpose. No trick questions, however, ever seem to have been put even to the agents who were under suspicion.

Had the whole of the W/T traffic been under constant review in the light of all the known facts; had trick questions been put to the agents; had each mishap been examined with a view to appreciating its possible implications on the position of others and the organization as a whole; had each returning agent been meticulously questioned, not because he was suspect but with a view to obtaining all possible information from him; above all had a record been kept which set out in chronological order all the known facts regarding the enterprise and the sources from which such facts were known; a record which would have been readily available for consultation in considering all the above matters; had all this been done then I feel little doubt that the S.O.E. organization in Holland would not have met the fate which overtook it.

If it were possible there would be much to be said for an officer familiar with the difficulties of running a controlled transmitter to be sitting alongside those who are in contact with a W/T operator in the field. Short of that it is suggested that the traffic could be examined by such an officer from time to time. In any event it is submitted that it should be the primary duty of some officer to examine and keep under constant examination all the happenings in the field, as well as the mishaps, with a view to satisfying himself as to the true security position and advising those responsible for the offensive accordingly. It is not in my view sufficient in this connection that returning agents should be dealt with as individuals who may be suspect; but it should be someone's duty to examine them with a view to obtaining from them, in the light of all the records affecting the matter, all information which those agents can supply which may be relevant, not merely to the offensive, but to the security of the organization in the field. I think, however, that the precautions indicated above would be of little avail in the absence of a record or records in the form of a journal setting out all the known facts regarding the organization in the field as a whole and the characters taking part in its activities. For the purpose of guarding against the risk of S.O.E. channels being used for introducing German agents into this country, an M.I.5. officer has examined the individual cases of S.O.E. agents coming here who are known or suspected to have been in contact with the Germans. While not suggesting for a moment that any German agent has been introduced into this country in this manner (the evidence is to the contrary) it is plain to me that the officer conducting the examination has been seriously handicapped by the lack of such records. When, for example, he was examining one of the cases which has been dealt with in this note he was told that ARNAUD was an S.O.E. passeur. This he had to take as being correct and he was not shown any file which set out all that was known regarding ARNAUD and the circumstances of his recruitment. I suspect that no such record existed or existed in an available form. The fact that ARNAUD was one of the